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ABSTRACT

This poll provides comparisons of teachers' attitudes with the views of the general public on the public schools. Teachers' opinions were obtained on: (1) effectiveness of public schools; (2) effectiveness of teachers, administrators, school boards, and parents; (3) quality of teacher education; (4) presidential candidates' attitudes toward education; (5) school prayer; (6) why teachers leave the profession; (7) attracting and retaining good teachers; (8) teacher compensation; (9) differential pay in subject areas with teacher shortages; (10) merit pay; (11) reasons for favoring/opposing merit pay; (12) who should determine which teachers receive merit pay; (13) what percentage of teachers deserve merit pay; (14) the seriousness of the discipline problem; (15) perceived incidence of school problems; (16) reasons for discipline problems; (17) support for public school testing; (18) remedial classes or repeating a grade; (19) raising college entrance requirements; (20) a state board examination for teachers; (21) desirability of teaching as a profession; (22) unions, strikes, and arbitration; (23) how teachers see themselves; (24) subject requirements; (25) sex education; (26) the goals of education; (27) extending the school day or year; and (28) control of instruction. Responses are recorded on tables and a summary of findings is presented. (JD)

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THE PHI DELTA KAPPA GALLUP POLL OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Alec Gallup

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Table of Contents

Introduction 5
Summary of Findings 6
Teachers Grade the Public Schools 9
Teachers Grade Teachers, Administrators, School Boards, and Parents 9
Teachers Grade Teacher Education 10
Presidential Candidates 10
School Prayer 10
Why Teachers Leave the Profession 10
Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers 11
Teacher Compensation 11
Differential Pay in Subject Areas with Teacher Shortages 11
Merit Pay 11
Reasons for Favoring/Opposing Merit Pay 11
Who Should Determine Which Teachers Receive Merit Pay? 12
What Percentage of Teachers Deserve Merit Pay? 12
Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools 13
How Serious Is the Discipline Problem? 13
Perceived Incidence of School Problems 13
Reasons for Discipline Problems 14
Support for Public School Testing 14
Remedial Classes or Repeating a Grade 14
Raising College Entrance Requirements 15

A State Board Examination for Teachers 15
Desirability of Teaching as a Profession 15
Unions, Strikes, and Arbitration 15
How Teachers See Themselves 16
Subject Requirements 17
Sex Education 17
The Goals of Education 18
Extending the School Day or Year 19
Control of Instruction 19
Research Procedure 20

Introduction

This is the first Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Like all surveys, it is a sampling of attitudes held during a particular time, in this case, during May 1984. But in addition to determining teachers' attitudes toward a variety of current issues concerning their profession, a primary purpose of this poll is to establish a set of benchmark measurements from which opinion trends can be tracked in subsequent surveys.

This poll also provides comparisons of teachers' attitudes with the views of the general public, including parents of children enrolled in the public schools. The *Phi Delta Kappan* has published the annual Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools since 1969, and Phi Delta Kappa International has sponsored those polls since 1981. Many of the questions used in this poll of teachers' attitudes were also used in the polls of the public's attitudes, thus providing a rich basis for comparison. To be sure that this survey would deal with the issues of greatest concern to both educators and the public, Phi Delta Kappa solicited suggestions for questions from a wide range of leaders in the field of education.

This PDK/Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools is valuable for local decision makers in two important ways. First, it alerts decision makers to teachers' reactions to a variety of school programs and policies. Second, it serves as a benchmark against which local attitudes can be compared. Local officials are welcome to use the questions asked in this survey for their own polls. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limits are placed on the use of information contained in this report, except customary credit to source and observance of the canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

This poll originally appeared in two installments in the October 1984 and January 1985 issues of the *Phi Delta Kappan*. Funding for this survey was provided by Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. Phi Delta Kappa has also published two books on the annual polls of the public's attitudes toward education, including *The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969 - 1984: A Topical Summary* and *A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969 - 1978*, which may also be of interest to the reader.

Summary of Findings

Attitudes of American teachers are markedly uniform. Very few differences in attitudes are apparent among the nine subgroups in the teacher population by which the data were analyzed. Only in the case of elementary and high school teachers do differences in views emerge — and then only rarely.

At the same time, the attitudes of teachers and the public are frequently at odds. Of the approximately 30 issues in the two installments of this teacher poll on which the opinion of the public is also available, teachers and the public agree on one-third of the issues and disagree on two-thirds.

Grading the schools. American teachers give high marks to U.S. public schools. Asked to grade the local public schools, using the traditional grading system, two-thirds of the teachers award the local schools either an A or a B. When asked to grade the school in which they themselves teach, an even higher percentage (72%) award an A or a B.

Grading teachers, administrators, school boards, and parents. The same favorable attitude is also apparent when teachers are asked to rate other members of the teaching profession; however, teachers are less positive about the performance of administrators in the public schools and about local school boards. Almost eight teachers in 10 (78%) would award their peers an A or a B, but substantially fewer would give administrators and school board members top grades. Teachers' grades for parents fall far below those they give to teachers, administrators, and school board members. Asked to grade the job that local parents are doing in bringing up their children, only one teacher in five gives parents an A or a B.

The U.S. public rates the performance of teachers considerably lower than the teachers rate themselves; only 50% of the public gives teachers a grade of A or B. (The public gives principals and administrators about the same rating as it gives teachers.) On the other hand, the public rates school boards somewhat higher than teachers do — 41% of the public give school boards an A or a B, but only 29% of the teachers give them top grades. Thirty-three percent of the public give parents an A or a B — the lowest percentage for any group rated, but still a good deal higher than the grades assigned to parents by teachers.

Teacher compensation. A major source of teacher dissatisfaction involves what teachers perceive as poor compensation. For example, nine teachers in 10 state that their salaries are too low. And almost nine in 10 say that low pay is the reason why teachers are leaving the profession. Similarly, when asked for ways to reduce school costs, only 5% react favorably to the idea of cutting teacher salaries. The public tends to agree — but by a significantly smaller percentage — that teachers are paid too little.

Merit pay. U.S. teachers, including all major subgroups in the teacher population, oppose the idea of merit pay by a 2-1 ratio. Teachers' objections to merit pay center on two main points: 1) the difficulties in evaluation (i.e., determining who should receive merit pay) and 2) the morale problems that might be created if merit pay plans were put into effect.

At the same time, however, fully three-quarters of U.S. teachers admit that some teachers in their own schools are outstanding enough to warrant merit pay. Asked to estimate the percentage of teachers in their own schools who deserve merit pay, teachers who favor merit pay say about 33%.

If merit pay were adopted by the local schools, teachers would want fellow teachers, administrators, or educators from outside the district — rather than non-educators — to decide who should receive it. Only about one-fifth of teachers feel that either students or parents should be involved in this decision.

Similarly, teachers feel that the criteria to be used in selecting candidates for merit pay should be 1) an evaluation by educators, either teachers or administrators, and 2) an advanced degree or years of experience. A relatively small percentage of teachers feel that students' academic achievement or improvement, students' evaluations of teachers, or parents' opinions should influence the awarding of merit pay.

The views of the public provide a rather dramatic contrast to the attitudes of teachers. The public favors merit pay for teachers by a ratio of 4-1 (76% to 19%). The public also feels that the most important criterion upon which to base merit pay should be the academic achievement or improvement of students as measured by standardized tests (68%). Only 39% of teachers agree.

Attitudes concerning some recommendations of the national commissions and task forces on education. The attitudes of U.S. teachers are mixed regarding the recommendations for improving the public schools that have been made by the recent wave of national commissions and task forces on education. By wide margins, teachers favor higher salaries for teachers and state board examinations to prove teachers' knowledge of subject matter. By a somewhat smaller margin, they favor tougher college entrance requirements. Unlike teachers, the public opposes tougher admissions standards for colleges and universities.

The reform reports also made a number of recommendations for changing subject requirements. Virtually all teachers (95%) agree with the reports that English and math should be required of all students, not just the college-bound. Specifically, teachers recommend an average of 3.8 years of English for the college-bound and 3.6 years of English for the non-college-bound; 3.2 years of math for the college-bound and 2.7 years of math for the non-college-bound; 3.0 years of science for the college-bound and 2.7 years of science for the non-college-bound.

Fifty-nine percent of teachers would require all students to take computer science; 78% would require vocational training for the non-college-bound, and 48% would require some vocational education even for the college-bound. Seventy-seven percent of teachers would require about two years (2.1) of a foreign language for college-bound students.

The public's attitudes toward subject requirements are basically the same as those of teachers, with the exception that a smaller percentage of the public would require science of high school students and a slightly larger percentage would require computer science.

Another of the major recommendations of the national commissions and task forces was that either the school day or school year be lengthened to provide more time for instruction. U.S. teachers oppose both of these recommendations by roughly the same margins: 66% oppose lengthening the school year; 72% oppose lengthening the school day. Virtually every major subgroup in the teacher population opposes both of these recommendations.

School discipline. U.S. teachers have a much different perception of the problem of discipline in the public schools than does the public. Teachers feel that the most important problem facing local public schools — named by 31% of the respondents — is lack of parental support, not lack of discipline. Only about one teacher in six (16%) says that discipline is a very serious problem in the local schools.

In addition, nonacademic disciplinary problems — e.g., incomplete assignments, cheating, talking back to teachers, and truancy — are mentioned frequently by teachers as occurring "most of the time" or "fairly often." A relatively small percentage of teachers say that criminal activities — i.e., vandalizing or theft of property, use or selling of drugs or alcohol, carrying of weapons, physical attacks on students or staff — occur in their schools "most of the time" or "fairly often."

The public's perceptions of discipline in the schools differ considerably from those of teachers, however. The public has named discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools since the Gallup surveys of attitudes toward the schools began in 1969. One-third of the public in 1984 — compared to 16% of teachers — believe that disciplinary problems in the local schools are very serious. Most significant, however, the public perceives violence and criminal activities as much more prevalent in the schools than teachers do. Far larger percentages of the public than of teachers, for example, say that a variety of these kinds of problems occur "most of the time" or "fairly often."

Teachers blame disciplinary problems on outside influences — specifically, the courts, lack of respect for authority, and especially lack of discipline in the home, which is mentioned by virtually all teachers (94%). Only about one-third of the teachers feel that teachers themselves are at fault.

The public agrees, although by a smaller percentage than teachers, that the principal source of disciplinary problems is lack of discipline in the home. On the other hand, the public is more prone to blame teachers for disciplinary problems.

Testing. Teachers are divided on the value of public school testing programs. A slight majority oppose exams for grade promotion, and an even smaller majority favor exams for high school graduation. Two-thirds of those who approve of an exam for high school graduation feel that the results should be released to the public — and compared with results from other schools that serve the same racial and socioeconomic mix.

The public's view differs markedly from that of teachers on the issue of testing. Although the public approves of an exam for high school graduation by a wide 7-3 ratio, only half of those who favor the exam also favor the release of results to the public and approve of comparing the results with those of other schools.

School prayer. Elementary teachers favor voluntary school prayer by a 2-1 ratio. High school teachers are much more closely divided on this issue than are elementary school teachers. The public approves of school prayer by a wider margin, 4-1.

Politics. Asked which Presidential candidate would be more likely to improve the quality of education in the U.S., teachers name Walter Mondale by a ratio of nearly 2-1, 42% to 25%. The U.S. public also feels that Mondale would be more likely than Reagan to improve American education, but Mondale's lead over Reagan on this issue is not quite as great with the public (42% to 34%) as with teachers.

Desirability of teaching as a profession. Teachers are somewhat negative about the desirability of teaching as a profession. Teachers are about evenly divided on whether they would like a daughter to enter teaching, but they are against a son going into teaching by a ratio of 2 to 1 (59% to 31%).

By contrast, the public favors a daughter going into teaching by a ratio of about 5 to 4 (50% to 39%). The public is divided as to whether a son should enter the profession.

How teachers see themselves. Teachers rate their contribution to society the *highest* of 12 professions, including physicians, clergy, business executives, and lawyers. But they also feel that their status is the *lowest* of all of these professions.

The general public rates teachers' contribution to society somewhat lower than that of clergy or physicians. The public rates teachers' status in the community somewhat higher than the teachers themselves do.

Teacher unions/teacher strikes. U.S. teachers strongly support teacher unions and associations. By a 5 to 2 ratio, they believe that unions have contributed to public education; by a 2 to 1 ratio, they believe that teachers should have the right to strike.

By contrast, only about one person in five in the general public feels that teacher unions have improved the quality of public education. Twice as many believe that unions have hurt public education. The public also opposes, by a 2 to 1 ratio, giving teachers the right to strike.

Goals of education. A majority (56%) of teachers rate developing good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, and the ability to concentrate as a most important goal of education. The same percentage of teachers also rate the ability to think — creatively, objectively, and analytically — as a goal of the highest importance. A majority of teachers also cite developing the ability to speak and write, developing the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems, and encouraging the desire for lifelong learning as among the highest priorities of education.

Sex education. U.S. teachers overwhelmingly support sex education in both the secondary schools and the elementary schools. Almost nine out of 10 teachers (86%) support sex education in high school, and three out of four (75%) support sex education in elementary school.

More specifically, for high school students, large majorities of teachers approve the discussion of such topics as the biology of reproduction, venereal disease, and birth control. Smaller majorities approve of including in high school sex education classes such topics as premarital sex, the nature of sexual intercourse, abortion, and homosexuality. For elementary school students, the only topic that a majority of teachers (70%) feel would be appropriate is the biology of reproduction.

The public supports sex education in the high schools by a smaller margin than teachers do (70% as opposed to 86%). But the public is about evenly divided — 45% for and 48% against — on the question of sex education in the elementary schools.

Control of instruction. Teachers feel that they should have the most influence on what is taught in the public schools. They feel even more strongly that they should have the most influence in the selection of schoolbooks.

By contrast, the public feels that parents and school boards should have the most say about what is taught in the public schools. But the public agrees with teachers that teachers should have the most say about the selection of books and other instructional materials.

The 1984 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

Teachers Grade the Public Schools

American teachers give high marks to the U.S. public school system. Asked to grade the public schools in their community using the traditional A-through-F grading system, two-thirds of American teachers give the schools a mark of A or B. Only 4% give the schools a D, and 1% give them a failing grade. When asked to grade the schools in which they themselves teach, the percentage of teachers who give the schools an A or a B rises to 72%.

The question:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here? How about the public school in which you teach? What grade would you give your own school?

	Local Schools %	Your Own School %
A rating	12	21
B rating	52	51
C rating	27	20
D rating	4	4
FAIL	1	2
Don't know	4	2

Teachers Grade Teachers, Administrators, School Boards, and Parents

American teachers are even more positive about the performance of teachers than they are about the performance of the schools, with 78% awarding teachers an A or a B. However, this highly favorable attitude does not carry over to the performance of others involved in local education — principals and other administrators, local school boards, or the parents of students attending the local schools.

Only 44% of teachers feel that the job done by principals and other administrators in the local schools deserves either an A or a B. Fewer than one teacher in three (28%) would award the local school board either an A or a B, with 13% giving it a failing grade.

At the bottom of the list are the parents of local schoolchildren, who receive an A or a B for their efforts from only one teacher in five (21%). A larger percentage of teachers (31%) give parents a D or an F.

The question:

What grade would you give the teachers in the local public schools? The administrators in the local public schools? The local school board? What grade would you give the parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children?

	Teachers %	Administrators %	Local School Board %	Parents %
A rating	18	10	4	2
B rating	60	34	25	19
C rating	17	34	36	45
D rating	2	15	19	24
FAIL	*	5	13	7
Don't know	3	2	3	3

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

Although the grades the public gave the schools in 1984 were the highest recorded in a decade, they were still much lower than the grades the teachers give the schools. Almost two-thirds of American teachers (64%) give the local schools an A or a B; only about four in 10 (42%) of the general population did so.

Differences between the public's and the teachers' views also show up in the grades these groups award to teachers, administrators, local school boards, and parents. Although the public grades teachers somewhat higher than it grades the local schools, only 50% of the public give teachers a grade of A or B, a substantially lower figure than the 78% of teachers who give their peers an A or a B.

Although teachers grade administrators considerably lower than they do their peers, the U.S. public rates administrators about the same as it does teachers. On the other hand, the U.S. public grades both school boards and parents higher than American teachers do. Forty-one percent of the public give the school board an A or a B; only 29% of teachers do so.

Both the public and teachers rate parents the lowest. Only one-third of the public and 21% of teachers give parents a grade of A or B.

	Local Schools	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
A rating	12	10
B rating	52	32
C rating	27	35
D rating	4	11
FAIL	1	4
Don't know	4	8

Teachers Grade Teacher Education

About half of U.S. teachers in every major subgroup of the teacher population would give the teacher education program they attended a grade of A or B. Collectively, 10% of teachers would award their teacher training programs a grade of D, and 6% would give their teacher training programs a failing grade.

The question:

What grade would you give the teacher education training you received?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
A rating	14	14	14
B rating	35	37	34
C rating	33	34	31
D rating	10	8	11
FAIL	6	4	8
Don't know	2	3	2

Presidential Candidates

Asked which Presidential candidate, Ronald Reagan or Walter Mondale, would be more likely to improve the quality of education in the U.S., American teachers name Mondale by a ratio of nearly 2-1, 42% to 25%. About one-third say that there would be no difference between the candidates or have no opinion.

Although the American public also feels that Mondale would be more likely than Reagan to improve American education, the ratio is much smaller (42% to 34%).

The question:

Which Presidential candidate do you feel would be more likely, as President, to improve the quality of public education in the U.S. — Ronald Reagan or Walter Mondale?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Walter Mondale	42	41	44	42
Ronald Reagan	25	25	25	34
No difference/ no opinion	33	34	31	24

School Prayer

Elementary school teachers favor voluntary school prayer by roughly a 2-1 ratio. High school teachers are much more closely divided on the issue, favoring school prayer by 47% to 37%.

The American public approves of school prayer by a wider ratio (4-1) than teachers. At the same time, however, there has been some decline in public support for school prayer in recent years.

The question:

Do you favor or oppose a proposed Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow voluntary prayer in the public schools?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Yes	52	56	47	74
No	33	30	37	19
Don't know	15	14	16	7

Why Teachers Leave the Profession

Respondents were shown a card listing a number of problems that affect the teaching profession, and they were asked which three problems they feel are the main factors causing teachers to leave their jobs. Low salaries are by far the most frequently cited, with almost nine in 10 teachers (87%) mentioning this reason.

The question:

Many public school teachers are leaving the classroom. Here are some reasons that are sometimes given. Which *three* of these do you think are the main reasons why teachers are leaving their jobs?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Low teacher salaries	87	85	89
Discipline problems in schools	46	49	41
Low standing of teaching as a profession	38	37	38
Students are unmotivated, uninterested in school	37	31	41
Lack of public financial support for education	26	24	28
Parents don't support the teachers	21	25	16
Outstanding teacher performance goes unrewarded	20	16	25
Difficulty of advancement	19	19	19
Parents are not interested in children's progress	11	11	11

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

The public, surveyed in 1982, differed from the teachers as to why teachers leave the profession. Only 52% of the public mentioned low teacher salaries as one of the main reasons why teachers leave; 63% cited discipline as one of the main factors.

Paradoxically, the public was much more likely than teachers to see parents' lack of interest in their children's progress as a reason for teachers to leave the profession. Twenty-five percent of the public mentioned this reason, but only 11% of teachers do. Similarly, 37%

of the public said that lack of support from parents is one of the factors causing teachers to leave the profession, whereas only 21% of teachers cite this as a reason.

Reasons for Leaving	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1982) %
Low teacher salaries	87	52
Discipline problems in schools	46	63
Low standing of teaching as a profession	38	15
Students are unmotivated, uninterested in school	37	37
Lack of public financial support for education	26	24
Parent don't support the teachers	21	37
Outstanding teacher performance goes unrewarded	20	13
Difficulty of advancement	19	14
Parents are not interested in children's progress	11	25

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers

Slightly more than one-third of U.S. teachers (37%) report that their schools have had difficulty in attracting good teachers, and about half (48%) say that their schools have had difficulty in retaining good teachers. In both instances the percentage is higher for high school than for elementary teachers.

The question:

Does the school in which you teach have difficulty in getting good teachers?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Yes	37	31	45
No	57	65	48
No opinion	6	4	7

The question:

Does the school in which you teach have difficulty in *keeping* good teachers?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Yes	48	43	55
No	47	52	39
No opinion	5	5	6

Teacher Compensation

Nine out of 10 teachers say that teacher salaries are too low; virtually none say that teacher salaries are too high.

The question:

Do you think salaries for teachers in this community are too high, too low, or just about right?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Too low	90	89	89
Too high	*	*	*
Just about right	9	10	9
No opinion	1	1	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

The public is divided almost evenly on the question of whether teacher salaries are too low or about right. Forty-one percent feel that teacher salaries are just about right, and almost as many respondents (37%) say that they are too low. Very few respondents (7%) think teacher salaries are too high.

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Too low	90	37
Too high	*	7
Just about right	9	41
No opinion	1	15

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Differential Pay in Subject Areas With Teacher Shortages

A number of observers have suggested that more pay be given to teachers in areas of critical national need, such as science, mathematics, and vocational/technical subjects. Three-fourths of teachers oppose such a measure. The public is more evenly divided on this issue, with 48% in favor of differential pay and 43% opposed.

The question:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Favor	21	18	25	48
Oppose	75	80	70	43
No opinion	4	2	5	9

Merit Pay

American teachers oppose the idea of merit pay by a 2-1 ratio, 64% to 32%. This ratio is consistent across all major teacher population subgroups.

The question:

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Favor	32	29	35
Oppose	64	67	62
No opinion	4	4	3

Reasons for Favoring/Opposing Merit Pay

Teachers oppose merit pay for two basic reasons: 1) the difficulty of evaluating teacher performance and 2) the morale problems that merit pay might cause.

About one-fourth of the teacher respondents (23%) say that it would be difficult to give *a fair* evaluation of teaching. Twelve percent say that administrators could

not give objective evaluations, and the same percentage say that teacher merit cannot be measured objectively at all.

About 12% of the teachers say that merit pay would create morale problems in their schools, and another 8% say that it would present political problems in the schools.

The question:

Why do you favor/oppose merit pay for teachers?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Oppose			
Difficult to give a fair evaluation	23	22	24
Would create problems/ morale problems	12	14	10
Administrators can't evaluate fairly	12	12	13
Political problems	8	9	7
Can't be objectively measured	12	12	12
Other	5	4	5
Favor			
Good teachers would be rewarded	25	23	27
Children would benefit	1	*	1
Other	7	6	8

(Figures add to more than 100 because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Who Should Determine Which Teachers Receive Merit Pay?

Almost two-thirds of the U.S. teachers (63%) say that a committee of teachers should determine which teachers receive merit pay. Next most frequently mentioned as potential decision maker is the school principal (57%), followed by a committee of outside educators (42%). Only about one teacher in five wants the decision to be made by either students or parents.

The question:

Suppose that your own school were to adopt the merit pay plan. Who, in your opinion, should determine which teachers should be given merit increases?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Committee of teachers	63	62	65
School principal	57	60	53
Committee of outside educators	42	42	40
Students	22	18	26
Parents	19	21	17
Other	11	11	11
No one qualified	2	2	3
Don't know	3	3	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple responses.)

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

The views of the public differ dramatically from those of teachers on the issue of merit pay. The public favors merit pay for teachers by a ratio of 4-1.

Two-thirds of the public (68%) believe that academic achievement or the improvement of student performance as measured by standardized tests should be one of the criteria used to determine which teachers receive merit pay. Only 39% of the teachers agree. But 66% of the teachers feel that other teachers in the system should be involved in the evaluation of teachers for merit pay, while only 48% of the public agree.

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Favor merit pay	32	76
Oppose merit pay	64	19
No opinion	4	5

	All Teachers (% favoring)	U.S. Public (% favoring)
Criteria for Awarding Merit Pay		
Administrators' evaluations	73	67
Evaluation by other teachers in the system	66	48
An advanced degree	53	66
Length of teaching experience	47	40
Academic achievement or improvement of students (as measured by standardized tests)	39	68
Students' evaluations	39	45
Parents' opinions	30	36

What Percentage of Teachers Deserve Merit Pay?

Although U.S. teachers tend to oppose merit pay, three-quarters of them say that some teachers in their own schools deserve merit pay.

The question:

Aside from whether you favor or oppose merit pay, do you feel there are any teachers in the school where you teach who are sufficiently outstanding to warrant merit pay, or not?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Yes	76	72	81
No	16	19	11
No opinion	8	9	8

(IF FAVOR MERIT PAY) What percentage of teachers do you feel warrants merit pay?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Responses of Those Who Favor Merit Pay			
Under 10%	13	11	16
10% to 19%	23	22	25
20% to 29%	17	15	19
30% to 59%	23	25	20
60% to 99%	17	21	13
No answer	7	6	7
Average	33	36	30

Major Problems Confronting The Public Schools

U.S. teachers say that the biggest problem confronting the public schools is parents' lack of interest and support (31%). The next most frequently mentioned problems — all cited by about one teacher in five — are lack of proper financial support, lack of interest or truancy on the part of pupils, and lack of discipline.

These responses are fairly consistent across all teacher population subgroups. One difference is that 35% of elementary school teachers mention parents' lack of interest, while only 26% of high school teachers mention this problem. On the other hand, 23% of high school teachers mention pupils' lack of interest or their truancy, while only 17% of elementary teachers do so.

The question:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Parents' lack of interest/ support	31	35	26	5
Lack of proper financial support	21	20	21	14
Pupils' lack of interest/ truancy	20	17	23	4
Lack of discipline	20	20	18	27
Problems with administration	10	8	12	3
Poor curriculum/poor standards	7	7	7	15
Use of drugs	5	3	6	18
Low teacher salaries	5	5	5	4
Difficulty getting good teachers	4	3	4	14
Large schools/overcrowding	4	5	2	4
Teachers' lack of interest	4	5	4	5
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	4	4	4	3
One-parent households	4	4	4	*
Lack of public support	3	3	4	*
Communication problems	3	4	3	1
Government interference/ regulation	3	2	4	1
Integration/busing	2	2	2	6
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	3	2
School board policies	2	2	2	*
Parental involvement with school activities	2	3	2	1
Mismanagement of funds/ programs	2	3	2	2
Moral standards	2	2	2	1
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	3	4
Lack of needed teachers	2	2	1	1
Crime/vandalism	1	*	2	3

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

How Serious Is the Discipline Problem?

Whereas about one-third of the public (34%) feel that discipline is a very serious problem in the schools, only 16% of the teachers agree. About one-third of both groups see the discipline problem as fairly serious. Nearly half of the teachers see the problem of discipline as not too serious (35%) or not at all serious (14%), but only about a quarter of the public agree with these judgments.

The question:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in your community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Very serious	16	17	15	34
Fairly serious	33	29	36	34
Not too serious	35	38	32	22
Not at all serious	14	12	17	4
No opinion	2	4	*	6

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Perceived Incidence of School Problems

Teachers differ markedly from the general public in their judgment of which of the problems confronting the schools are most important. The comparison is especially revealing with regard to criminal activities, which the public feels occur far more frequently than teachers do.

For example, 53% of the public feel that drugs are used at school "most of the time" or "fairly often." Only 17% of teachers agree. Almost half of the public (47%) but only 13% of the teachers think that drugs are sold at school "most of the time" or "fairly often."

About one-third of the public feel that alcoholic beverages are drunk at school "most of the time" or "fairly often," that school property is stolen "most of the time" or "fairly often," and that knives, firearms, and weapons of other kinds are carried at school "most of the time" or "fairly often." Teachers report that these criminal activities take place much less frequently: drinking, 10%; theft of school property, 23%; carrying weapons, 8%. However, teachers and the public are in closer agreement on how often such disciplinary problems as cheating, not completing homework, truancy, and so on occur.

The question:

About how often do each of the problems listed occur at the school where you teach?

	Respondents Who Say Most of the Time/Fairly Often	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Schoolwork and homework assignments not completed	76	64
Behavior that disrupts class	47	60
Truancy/being absent from school	47	53
Talking back to, disobeying teachers	43	56
Cheating on tests	40	48
Sloppy or inappropriate dress	37	47
Skipping classes	35	56
Stealing money or personal property belonging to other students, teachers, or staff	32	39
Vandalizing of school property	29	39
Theft of school property	23	34
Use of drugs at school	17	53
Selling of drugs at school	13	47
Drinking alcoholic beverages at school	10	35
Carrying of knives, firearms, or other weapons at school	8	29
Sexual activity at school	8	24
Racial fights between whites, blacks, Hispanics, or other minorities	4	22
Taking money or property by force, using weapons or threats	2	18
Physical attacks on teachers or staff	1	15

Reasons for Discipline Problems

Respondents were shown a list of potential reasons for discipline problems in the schools and asked to select those that they felt best explained why disciplinary problems exist. Teachers look outside the school for reasons to explain the disciplinary problems. For example, more than nine in ten (94%) say that lack of discipline in the home is one important reason for disciplinary problems in school, 74% cite lack of respect for law and authority throughout the society, 66% mention student troublemakers who cannot be removed from school, and 65% say that the courts have made administrators too cautious in dealing with student misbehavior.

The U.S. public tends to agree with teachers that lack of discipline in the home is the main cause of disciplinary problems in the schools. But the public mentions outside influences, including the home, less often than teachers do, and the public is much more likely to say that teachers are in part the cause of disciplinary problems — that teachers do not command respect, that teachers are not properly trained to deal with discipline problems, and that teachers fail to make classroom work interesting.

The question:

Many people say that "discipline" is one of the major problems of the public schools today. Would you please look over this list and check the reasons you think are most important to explain why there is a discipline problem?

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1983) %
Lack of discipline in the home	94	72
Lack of respect for law and authority throughout society	74	54
Students who are constant troublemakers often can't be removed from the schoo	66	42
The courts have made school administrators so cautious they don't deal severely with student misbehavior	65	41
Punishment is too lenient	50	39
Decline in teaching of good manners	48	37
One-parent families	42	26
Viewing television programs that emphasize crime and violence	39	39
Teachers themselves do not command respect	23	36
Teachers who are not properly trained to deal with discipline problems	19	42
Failure on the part of teachers to make classroom work more interesting	11	31

Support for Public School Testing

U.S. teachers are decidedly ambivalent about the merits of standardized achievement tests both for grade promotion and for graduation from high school.

Teachers are opposed to promotion from grade to grade on the basis of examinations; 43% say that they favor such tests, and 52% oppose them. They are more evenly divided on the question of a nationwide examination for high school graduation; 48% favor such a test, while 45% oppose it. Of the 48% who favor an examination for high school graduation, two-thirds feel that the outcomes should be released to the public, and virtually all favor comparing the exam results with those of other schools serving similar clienteles.

The question of testing for grade promotion is one of the few instances in this survey in which we found significant differences of opinion between elementary and high school teachers. Elementary teachers oppose an examination for grade promotion by a ratio of almost 2 to 1, while high school teachers favor promotion on the basis of an examination score by a margin of roughly 5 to 4.

Once again, teachers' attitudes are in stark contrast to those of the general public, which has for many years supported the notion of using standardized tests both for grade-to-grade promotion and for high school graduation. In the 1984 survey of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, the general public supported both of these uses of tests by a margin of about 3 to 1.

The question:

In your opinion, should children be promoted from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Yes	43	33	54	71
No	52	63	40	25
No opinion	5	4	6	4

The question:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Should be required	48	52	44	65
Should not be required	45	41	50	29
No opinion	7	7	6	6

Remedial Classes or Repeating a Grade

Teachers are opposed to having a student repeat a year's work if that student fails a subject. Three-quarters of the teachers (78%) favor having such a student take special remedial classes in the subject he or she failed; only 13% would prefer having the student repeat the whole year.

In 1978 the public was in virtual agreement with our 1984 sample of teachers on how to treat failing students. Four-fifths of the public would have had such students take special remedial classes rather than repeating the subjects they fail.

The question:

Should students who fail be required to take special remedial classes in the subjects they fail, or should they be required to repeat the whole year's work?

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1978) %
Special remedial classes	78	81
Repeat whole year's work	13	14
No opinion	9	5

Raising College Entrance Requirements

Many educators have argued that raising the entrance requirements of colleges and universities would be an effective way of inducing the public schools to raise their standards. Teachers in this survey favor this proposal by a small margin (47% to 39%).

The general public, however, does not agree. The public has always favored tougher standards at the high school level, but it rejects, by a margin of 59% to 27%, the raising of college entrance requirements.

The question:

Do you feel that four-year colleges and universities should raise their entrance requirements or not?

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Should	47	27
Should not	39	59
No opinion	14	14

A State Board Examination for Teachers

Approximately two-thirds of the teacher respondents say that they would favor a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they plan to teach. The U.S. public even more strongly favors the idea of a state board examination for teachers. Eighty-nine percent of the public support the idea.

The question:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach, before they are hired?

	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Yes	63	89
No	30	7
No opinion	7	4

Desirability of Teaching as a Profession

As a way of measuring their attitudes about the desirability of teaching as a profession, teachers were first asked whether they would like to have a daughter or a son enter the teaching profession. Teachers are about evenly divided in the case of a daughter's becoming a teacher (43% in favor, 46% opposed) and about 2 to 1 against a son's doing so (31% in favor, 59% opposed).

The question:

Would you like to have a *daughter* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

Would you like to have a *son* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	Daughter %	Son %
Yes	43	31
No	46	59
No opinion	11	10

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

Teachers' views on the desirability of teaching as a profession differ somewhat from the attitudes of the public. For example, the public favors a daughter's entering teaching by a ratio of roughly 5 to 4 (50% to 39%). For a son, the public is about evenly divided: 46% say that this would be a good idea, and 42% say that it would be a bad idea.

	All Teachers		U.S. Public	
	Daughter	Son	Daughter (1984)	Son (1984)
	%	%	%	%
Yes	43	31	50	46
No	46	59	39	42
No opinion	11	10	11	12

Unions, Strikes, and Arbitration

American teachers strongly support teacher unionism, as well as teachers' right to strike over salaries and working conditions. Asked whether they feel that unionization has helped or hurt the quality of public education in the U.S., half of the teacher respondents (49%) say that it has helped; only 18% say that unionization has hurt public education; 26% say that it has made no difference.

Teachers also support their right to strike. Asked whether public school teachers should be permitted to strike, almost two-thirds (63%) feel that they should be permitted to strike; only 26% say that teacher strikes should not be allowed.

Interestingly, teachers favor compulsory arbitration in disputes. Asked if they would favor arbitration if an agreement cannot be reached between a union and a school board, nine out of 10 favor such a plan, and only 3% are opposed.

The question:

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education in the U.S.?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Helped	49	48	50
Hurt	18	20	15
No difference	26	25	28
No opinion	7	7	7

The question:

Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Yes	63	58	70
No	26	30	20
No opinion	11	12	10

The question:

In case an agreement cannot be reached between a teacher union (or association) and the school board, would you favor or oppose a plan that would require the dispute to be settled by the decision of an arbitrator or panel acceptable to both the union and school board?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Favor	90	88	92
Oppose	3	4	2
No opinion	7	8	6

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

Teacher attitudes regarding the effects of unionization are in almost direct contrast to the attitudes of the general public. Whereas teachers — by a margin of almost 3 to 1 (49% to 18%) — feel that unions have helped the quality of American education, the public — by a margin of 2 to 1 — believes that unionization has hurt education.

Moreover, while teachers feel that they should have the right to strike (63% favor this right), 56% of the public *oppose* teacher strikes. The public agrees with the views of teachers concerning compulsory arbitration in settling disputes. Large majorities of teachers (90%) and of the public (79%) favor compulsory arbitration.

Effects of Unionization	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1981) %
Helped education	49	18
Hurt education	18	37
Made no difference	26	33
No opinion	7	12

Teacher Strikes	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1981) %
Yes, teachers should have the right	63	37
No, they should not	26	56
No opinion	11	7

Require Compulsory Arbitration	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1982) %
Favor	90	79
Oppose	3	7
No opinion	7	14

How Teachers See Themselves

Teachers were asked to rate each of 12 professions on a scale of zero to 10 to indicate their perceptions regarding two factors: 1) the profession's contribution to society and 2) the amount of prestige people in that profession have in their communities.

Not surprisingly, teaching heads the list for contribution to society, with about six teachers in 10 giving their peers a top rating. Next in order are physicians, who receive a 10 from 46% of teachers, and clergy, who receive a 10 from 43% of teachers.

Public school principals are far down the list. Only 19% of teachers give school principals a 10 for their contribution to society. At the bottom of the list are lawyers (6%), funeral directors (5%), business executives (4%), local political officeholders (4%), bankers (3%), realtors (2%), and advertising practitioners (2%).

The prestige that teachers feel they have in their own communities appears to be a sensitive subject. Only 1% of teachers give their profession the highest rating for its status in the community.

When ratings of societal contribution are compared with ratings of community status, we find that teachers rate three professions — teaching, the clergy, and public school principals — as lower in status than in their contribution to society. The gap for teachers is by far the largest — 58% to 1%.

The question:

Now we would like your impressions about different professions and occupations — based on your personal experience or on what you've heard or read. To indicate your impression, please use this scale that goes from the lowest rating of zero to the highest rating of 10.

First rate the professions listed below for the amount each contributes to the general good of society. The more you feel it contributes to the good of society, the higher the number you would pick; the less you feel it contributes, the lower the number you would pick.

Now rate these professions for the amount of prestige or status you feel people in each profession have in your community.

	Highest Rating: General Good Of Society %	Highest Rating: Prestige Or Status %
Public school teachers	59	1
Physicians	46	68
Clergy	43	20
Public school principals	19	3
Judges	13	45
Lawyers	6	32
Funeral directors	5	4
Business executives	4	26
Local political officeholders	4	15
Bankers	3	22
Realtors	2	3
Advertising practitioners	2	4

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

The public's feelings about the contribution teachers make to society and about the status of teachers differ somewhat from the views held by teachers. The public feels that teachers contribute substantially less to society than teachers feel they do. Twenty-nine percent of the public would give teachers the highest rating for their contribution to society, compared with 59% of teachers who would give themselves a 10.

On the other hand, the public feels that teachers have *more* status in the community than teachers feel that they do. Nineteen percent of the public would give teachers the highest rating for status. This figure is far higher than the 1% of teachers who rate their status a 10, but it is still one of the lower ratings that the public gives to any profession. Indeed, teaching is the profession that the public perceives as having the largest disparity between its status in the community and its contribution to society.

	Highest Rating			
	General Good of Society		Prestige or Status	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Public school teachers	59	29	1	19
Physicians	46	41	68	59
Clergy	43	46	20	42
Public school principals	19	28	3	25
Judges	13	12	45	31
Lawyers	6	12	32	31
Funeral directors	5	20	4	17
Business executives	4	-	26	-
Local political office-holders	4	3	15	16
Bankers	3	14	22	35
Realtors	2	7	3	6
Advertising practitioners	2	4	4	8

Subject Requirements

One of the major recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education was that significantly more time in high school be devoted to the traditional basics, English and mathematics, as well as to certain "new" basics, including science, computer science, foreign languages for the college-bound, and vocational training. Virtually all teachers feel that English, math, and science should be required for all students, both those who intend to go to college and those who do not.

However, teachers would distinguish between the college-bound and the non-college-bound in the number of years they would require of a given subject. For example, the average number of years of English that teachers would require for college-bound students is 3.8; the figure for non-college-bound students is 3.6. The figures for math are 3.4 years for the college-bound and 2.7 for the non-college-bound. For science, teachers would require 3.0 years for the college-bound and 2.4 years for the non-college-bound.

The question:

If you were the one to decide, which of the following subjects would you require every public high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take?

What about those public high school students who *do not plan to go on to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Should Be Required			
	For Those Planning to Go to College		For Those Not Planning To Go to College	
	%	Average Years Required	%	Average Years Required
Mathematics	96	3.4	94	2.7
English	95	3.8	93	3.6
History/U.S. government	95	2.9	91	2.2
Science	95	2.8	90	2.4
Foreign language	77	2.1	28	1.4
Physical education	74	2.6	73	2.6
Health education	73	1.5	75	1.6
Business	63	1.5	80	2.1
Art	54	1.3	45	1.3
Music	49	1.3	42	1.3
Industrial arts/ homemaking	46	1.4	78	2.4

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

The public agrees with teachers about the importance of requiring high school students to take English and mathematics. More than 90% of teachers and of the public would require all students to take these subjects. Similar percentages of the public and of teachers would require high school students to take business, and a somewhat smaller percentage of the public than of teachers would require high school students to take history and science.

For all other subjects, however, a much smaller percentage of the public than of teachers endorses course requirements for either college-bound or non-college-bound students.

	Should Be Required			
	For Those Planning to Go to College		For Those Not Planning to Go to College	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Mathematics	96	96	94	92
English	95	94	93	90
History/U.S. government	95	84	91	71
Science	95	84	80	61
Foreign language	77	57	28	19
Physical education	74	43	73	44
Health education	73	52	75	50
Business	63	68	80	76
Art	54	24	45	18
Music	49	22	42	18
Industrial arts/homemaking	46	37*	78	83*

*The U.S. public was asked about "vocational training."

Sex Education

U.S. teachers overwhelmingly support sex education in both public high schools and public elementary schools. Almost nine out of 10 teachers (86%) feel that sex education should be part of the instructional program in the high schools; only 8% oppose the idea. Seventy-five percent of teachers favor including sex education in the elementary schools; only 18% oppose the idea.

However, teachers believe that different sexual topics are appropriate for different levels of schooling. For example, eight out of 10 teachers feel that the following topics should be covered in high school sex education classes: the biology of reproduction, venereal disease, and birth control. Smaller majorities feel that premarital sex, abortion, homosexuality, and the nature of sexual intercourse should be covered in high school classes. Other than the biology of reproduction, much smaller percentages of teachers feel that specific sexual topics should be covered in the elementary schools.

The question:

Do you feel the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional program?

Do you feel the public *elementary* schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	In High School %	In Elementary School %
Should	86	75
Should not	8	18
No opinion	6	7

The question:

Which of the following topics, if any, should be included for high school students?
Which of the following topics, if any, should be included for elementary school students?

	In High School			In Elementary School		
	Should %	Should Not %	No Opinion %	Should %	Should Not %	No Opinion %
The biology of reproduction	83	15	2	70	28	2
Venereal disease	83	15	2	40	50	10
Birth control	80	18	2	29	58	13
Premarital sex	68	24	8	21	65	14
The nature of sexual intercourse	62	28	10	24	63	13
Abortion	64	27	9	18	65	17
Homosexuality	55	31	14	15	68	17

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

Almost as large a percentage of the U.S. public (70%) as of U.S. teachers (86%) supports sex education as part of the high school instructional program. For elementary schools, the public is about evenly divided; 45% favor and 48% oppose sex education in the elementary schools. However, with regard to the specific topics to be included in sex education at both levels, the public is substantially less in favor of instruction in each of these areas.

	In High School		In Elementary School	
Include Sex Education	**All Teachers %**	**U.S. Public %**	**All Teachers %**	**U.S. Public %**
Should	86	70	75	45
Should not	8	22	18	48
No opinion	6	8	7	7

	Should Be Included in High School		Should Be Included in Elementary School	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %	All Teachers %	U.S. Public %
Sex education (in general)	86	70	75	45
The biology of reproduction	83	54	70	37
Venereal disease	83	59	40	23
Birth control	80	55	29	20
Premarital sex	68	42	21	18
The nature of sexual intercourse	62	37	24	16
Abortion	64	38	18	12
Homosexuality	55	32	15	10

The Goals of Education

U.S. teachers were asked to rate the importance of certain goals of education on a scale of zero to 10. Fifty-six percent of teachers gave the highest rating (10) to two goals: developing good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, and the ability to concentrate; and developing the ability to think — creatively, objectively, and analytically. Fifty-five percent of teachers gave a top rating to developing the ability to speak and write correctly; 53%, to developing the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems; and 51%, to encouraging the desire to continue learning as a lifelong process.

The highest percentage of the U.S. public (68%) gives a 10 to developing the ability to speak and write correctly. The second-highest percentage of the public (64%) gives the highest rating to developing standards of what is right and wrong.

The question:

Please rate the importance of each of the following possible goals of education on a scale of zero to 10. A zero means a goal is not at all important and should not be part of the public school program. A 10 means a goal is the most important goal — before all others. A rating between zero and 10 means you consider the goal to be somewhere in between in importance.

	Highest Rating	
	All Teachers %	U.S. Public (1984) %
To help develop good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, the ability to concentrate	56	48
To develop the ability to think — creatively, objectively, analytically	56	51
To develop the ability to speak and write correctly	55	68
To develop the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems	53	54
To encourage the desire to continue learning throughout one's life	51	41
To encourage respect for law and order, for obeying the rules of society	46	52
To develop the ability to live in a complex and changing world	41	51
To prepare those who plan to attend college for college	36	46
To develop skills needed to get jobs for those not planning to attend college	34	54
To develop standards of what is "right and wrong"	33	64
To develop the desire to excel	32	51
To develop an understanding of democracy and to promote participation in the political process	31	33
To develop the ability to get along with different kinds of people	31	42
To develop respect for and understanding of other races, religions, nations, and cultures	30	39
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities and problems, i.e., sex, marriage, parenting, personal finances, alcohol and drug abuse	28	46
To help students make realistic plans for what they will do after high school graduation	27	52
To develop an understanding about different kinds of jobs and careers, including their requirements and rewards	20	56
To gain knowledge and understanding of science and scientific facts	17	45
To gain knowledge of the important facts of history, geography, etc.	15	42
To develop an appreciation for and participation in the arts, music, literature, theater, etc.	14	35
To help students overcome personal problems	13	45
To develop the ability to understand and use computers	12	43
To promote physical development through sports programs	8	20
To help students get good/high-paying jobs	6	46
To develop an appreciation of the "good" things in life	6	32

Extending the School Day or Year

Some of the education reform reports have recommended extending the length of the school day, the length of the school year, or both, in order to provide more time for instruction. U.S. teachers oppose both of these recommendations by roughly the same margins — 72% to 24% in the case of lengthening the school day and 66% to 28% in the case of lengthening the school year.

By contrast, the U.S. public is only marginally opposed to lengthening the school day or school year. The public opposes extending the school day by a margin of 42% to 52%, and the public opposes extending the school year by a margin of 44% to 50%.

The question:

How do you feel about extending the school day by one hour in the school in which you teach? Aside from the question of teacher/staff compensation, do you favor or oppose this idea?

	All Teachers	U.S. Public (1984)
	%	%
Favor	24	42
Oppose	72	52
No opinion	4	6

The question:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to about 180 days in the U.S. Aside from the question of teacher/staff compensation, how do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	All Teachers	U.S. Public (1984)
	%	%
Favor	28	44
Oppose	66	50
No opinion	6	6

Control of Instruction

U.S. teachers feel that they should have the most influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools in their communities. They feel even more strongly that they should have the most influence in the selection of books for classroom use and for school libraries.

For example, 33% of teachers feel that teachers should have the most influence in deciding what is taught; 19% say the school board, 17% say the state government, and 3% say the federal government. Only 2% say that parents should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught.

Almost eight in 10 teachers (79%) feel that they should have the most influence in the selection of books for classrooms and school libraries. Only 4% say principals or school administrators, 3% say the school board, and 2% say the parents.

The question:

In your opinion, who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools of your community?

	All Teachers	Elementary Teachers	High School Teachers
	%	%	%
Teachers	33	31	35
Local school board	19	17	20
State government	17	19	16
Federal government	3	2	3
Parents	2	2	2
No opinion	26	29	24

The question:

Who do you feel should have the most influence in the selection of books for use in public school classrooms and school libraries?

	All Teachers	Elementary Teachers	High School Teachers
	%	%	%
Teachers	79	76	82
Principals and school administrators	4	5	2
School board	3	2	3
Parents	*	*	1
No opinion	14	17	12

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Teacher Opinion vs. Public Opinion

Whereas teachers feel strongly that they should have the most say in determining what is taught in the public schools, the public feels that parents and local school boards should have the most influence in this area. Only 11% of the public agree that teachers should have the most influence; 27% say the school board, and 24% say parents.

In the selection of books for classrooms and school libraries, only 42% of the public feel that teachers should have the most influence. About one in five members of the public (18%) feel that parents should have the most influence in book selection.

Who Should Decide What Is Taught?

	All Teachers	U.S. Public (1984)
	%	%
Teachers	33	11
Local school board	19	27
State government	17	17
Federal government	3	9
Parents	2	24
No opinion	26	12

Who Should Select Books for Classrooms And Libraries?

	All Teachers	U.S. Public (1984)
	%	%
Teachers	79	42
Principals and school administrators	4	15
School board	3	13
Parents	*	18
No opinion	14	12

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Research Procedure

The findings of this survey come from mail interviews with a representative sample of U.S. teachers. From a list provided by Market Data Retrieval, a sample of 2,000 teachers was selected to reflect the total national population of teachers. The sample was stratified proportionately by region and by teaching level.

Questionnaires were mailed to the 2,000 teachers between 30 April and 9 May 1984. Six questionnaires were undeliverable, producing an effective mailing of 1,994 questionnaires. Of these, 813 (41%) were completed and returned.

To insure that the attitudes of nonrespondents were not significantly different from those of respondents, a telephone survey was conducted with a sample of 100 teachers who had not answered the mail survey. The results of the telephone survey showed that the sample of nonrespondents to the mail survey closely paralleled the sample of respondents — both in terms of attitudes and in terms of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.